

Aim at the Sun

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Category: Nightwing

Genre: Drama

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-07-02 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-07-02 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 22:00:20

Rating: K

Chapters: 1

Words: 6,886

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: This story is about Nightwing having to deal with Arsenal's death. (Obviously an elseworld, and I hope it stays an elseworld!!)

Aim at the Sun

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\*\*Aim at the Sun\*\*

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\*\* "Aim at the sun, and you may not reach it; but your arrow will  
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\*\*fly far higher than if aimed at an object on a level with  
yourself." \*\*

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\*\* --Joel Hawes\*\*

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\*\*"It takes a minute to have a crush on someone, an hour to like  
someone\*\*

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\*\* and a day to love someone- but it takes a lifetime to forget someone. " \*\*

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He was too late. Oh, God, he was too late. He's never been too late before, at least not when it *\*really\** mattered. Nightwing was numb. He knew he was on his knees. He knew held his lifeless friend. And in the back of his mind was that little voice that never ever went away. The one that told him to get up. The one that told him rest of the team would be here soon, and he had to be in control. He was the leader. But instead he lost what control he had and became wracked with sobs, clutching his friend, feeling his tears get caught in the holes of his mask, pool, and then fall on his friend's red hair.

Roy had disappeared a few days ago, but his teammates started to get concerned only yesterday. If only they had started the search sooner. If only he had been quicker in following the clues. They just assumed he went on some trip or mission. Without taking Lian. Without making sure Lian had a babysitter. Lian. Oh, God, he was Lian's guardian now. Why did it take him until yesterday to really start looking?

It was clear what had happened. An old, huge, abandoned warehouse, haunted with the past week's events. The two ropes hanging from the ceiling that had had Roy's arms bound until Nightwing released him. The cuts, gashes, bruises, needlemarks on Roy. All through the torture Roy would have been looking for him. Looking for signs of a rescue. But none came. He was going to find who did this. And his own ethics be damned.

Nightwing was only vaguely aware of another presenceâ€"another voice. "Nightwing?" Searching. "Nightwing?!" Questioning panic. "Oh, God, Nightwing!!" Total panic. As though he were somewhere else, Nightwing felt Donna's pure grief as she ran to him. She tried to pry Roy away from him. He wouldn't move. He couldn't move. He looked up at Roy's first love with blank, red eyes. He let his muscles turn to water and Donna wrested Roy away from him.

Without Roy to support him, Nightwing fell forward with his chest over his knees. He stayed in his loose safe ball and put his hands behind his head, with his arms covering his ears. He wanted to block out Donna's cries. He wanted to block out the shouts and cries of his arriving teammates. He wanted to block out the world.

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It was sometime after midnight; Nightwing wasn't sure of the time; and he was perched on his favorite gargoyle contemplating a future without his archer friend. He heardâ€"no more like feltâ€"a presence behind him, and he turned to only long enough to acknowledge the visitor. Batman stepped forward to stand behind his son and studied Nightwing's view for a moment before he asked solemnly, "How are you doing?"

Without turning, Nightwing answered , "Not good." After a pause he confided, "Today I arranged a funeral for the first time in my life."

Batman paused, and then asked the only thing he could think to say, "Did you find the men that did it?"

Nightwing changed his position to face his mentor, still sitting on the gargoyle. "No." He didn't know how to feel about the question. With a mixture of defensiveness and guilt immersed in the grief that penetrated his soul, he said quietly, "Unless you mean me."

Batman's eyes bore into Nightwing; Dick could feel his mentor's eyes on him without looking up. Bruce said, "You didn't kill Roy, Dick."

"Didn't I?" Dick's eyes started to water. "If I had looked when he first disappeared.. I should have looked.. I should have been suspicious.."

"Dick, everyone who knew Roy knew he was liable to take off without telling anyone. Just like Oliver used to do."

Nightwing shook his head. "No, not anymore. Not with Lian. He didn't take her with him or make plans for a babysitter for her. I should have known. That should have been the only clue I needed."

Bruce countered, "It's hard to not think that he didn't resort to his old ways and just take off. It's a normal human reaction. He could have gone for a day or two. You did start looking after the second day he was missing."

"But it was too late. I'm not supposed to be human. I'm supposed to be better than anyone. I'm supposed to catch things like that."

"Dick, stop tearing yourself apart. You *are* human, and you didn't kill Roy. Look at me, Dick," he waited until Dick complied, "You didn't kill Roy." Nightwing stared into his eyes for a minute and then broke eye contact to look at the gargoyle's head. Batman followed Nightwing's gaze, wishing he knew what to say to take away Dick's self-imposed guilt. But he never was good with words. At least not with the people he loved. But he had to try. He looked back at Nightwing and said, "What you can do is find the people that *did* kill Roy. Have you started to look?"

Nightwing stayed focused on the gargoyle as he answered, "No. I know I'm supposed to be impassive when working on a case, even this one. And besides my parents' murders, this case is probably the most important to me to solve that I've ever been faced with. But I just can't do it. I can't get myself to think straight enough to do it."

"Dick, no one could do what you're suggesting you should be able to do. Roy was one of your oldest friends. You can't just put those feelings on a shelf."

Dick looked up at Batman in a questioning, puzzled manner, "You do it all the time."

"I've never let anyone, except perhaps you and Alfred, get as close to me as Roy was to you."

Now Dick was defensive as he said, "And that's a bad thing?"

"No of course not. That's the healthy thing to do. Something I wish I could do. But this is the worst part of allowing people to be close, and I can't take that chance. I think you know that."

Dick nodded absentmindedly as his thoughts went to the past. First to Bruce's parents, then to his own. Fighting back tears, he said quietly, "I didn't think anything would ever rip me apart like my parents' deaths did."

Bruce watched heartbroken as agony crossed Dick's face and tears escaped and rolled down his son's cheek. He wanted nothing more than to snatch Dick's pain away. Instead he asked gravely, "What about the girl?"

"Lian?" Nightwing looked up and said matter-of-factly, "I'm her legal guardian now. Bruce, I have no idea how to be a parent. Or even if keeping Lian is the best thing for her. This was Roy's greatest fearâ€"that he would die before she became of age. I've often wondered why Roy wanted me to become her guardian. Why he didn't chose someone more obvious like Donna or Kory."

"Probably because you offer the most stability. There is something to be said for a secret identity. And I believe Roy thought you would be a good parent for his daughter. I believe you will. You care too much not to be."

Dick bowed his head at the acknowledgement. He commented softly, "She's only a year older than Roy was when he lost his father. I've got to make sure she has a happy childhood. How can I do that when her father is dead? How do I even know if my raising Lian is the best thing for her? How did you know?"

Bruce understood that Dick was asking how he decided to foster an orphaned circus boy. "I didn't. But I saw too much of me in you to let it go. Our fates were too similar, and for my own sanity, I had to make sure you didn't turn out like I did. I think you should consider Roy's wishes for Lian; he knew who would raise his daughter well. You know what her father wanted for her, and she knows you and the rest of the Titans. You wouldn't be raising her alone, just as Roy wasn't raising her alone. I didn't trust Roy's judgement in most situations, but from what I understand, his judgement was solid when his daughter was concerned."

Dick nodded, and then thought outloud, "What if Cheshire comes and tries to take Lian?"

Batman answered impartially, "Roy had custody, and he transferred custody to you. Not to mention that in the courts Cheshire wouldn't have a chance considering her chosen profession." He added matter-of-factly, "If she tries, you fight it. I know for something as important as Roy's daughter's happiness you'll be successful."

Dick looked at Batman with red eyes and nodded. He was grateful for Bruce's confidence in him, and for Bruce's ability to listen to him now without being judgmental. Something he didn'tâ€"couldn'tâ€"often do. He said quietly, "Thanks."

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"I want Daddy!!" Lian cried and struggled as Donna tried to hold her as if to protect her from the pain Donna knew she would feel for the rest of her life. The pair was sitting on Lian's bed, and, dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, Dick watched from the corner of the bedroom, trying to distance himself from the scene as much as he could.

Donna started her horrible news, "Honey, your Daddy had to go away." She was fighting her own tears. She knew this was going to be one of the worst experiences of her life. Her tears started to betray her as she confided in Lian, "God asked your Daddy to keep Grandpa Ollie company."

"But Grandpa Ollie's dead! Daddy says we can't see him anymore!" Lian declared.

At the girl's innocent words, Donna couldn't hold her tears back any longer. She looked at Dick with her wet eyes and she could see that it was taking all of her friend's control to keep himself together. She nodded and said with a cracked voice and through tears, "That's right, sweetie. But God needed your Daddy to stay with Grandpa Ollie. It's very important. But that means he can't come back to us."

Donna watched Lian as the little girl started to understand as she started to cry even harder. Her own tears free flowing now, Donna squeezed her eyes closed and held Lian tight, holding Lian's head against her chest and rocking the child as she shh'd soothingly. After a moment, Donna loosened her grip and explained, "Before your Daddy went away, he asked Uncle Nightwing if he would take care of you like your Daddy did. Uncle Nightwing said he'd like that very much, didn't you?" Donna looked at Dick, and Lian followed her gaze, her sobbing stopping long enough to get Dick's response. Dick nodded mutely, afraid to speak. Donna asked Lian, "Would you like to stay with Uncle Nightwing?"

Lian spoke meekly with her tiny arms wrapped around Donna's neck, "I want to stay with Daddy."

Donna closed her eyes for a moment, fighting for control. She said, "You can't stay with Daddy now, honey. Much much later you can stay with him, but for now your Daddy wants you to stay with Uncle Nightwing."

Lian looked to Dick without removing her arms from Donna's neck, and Dick managed a small smile at the young girl. She said quietly, "Ok."

Donna looked up at Dick while still holding Lian close. She said softly, "Sweetie, do you remember Uncle Nightwing's other name?"

"Uncle Dick?" Lian questioned.

"Very good, honey. Uncle Dick wants you to call him that now, ok?" Lian looked to Dick for confirmation and he nodded. Dick worried that Lian was too young to keep his secret, but he hoped that she would be with him when he was in costume only in the presence of people who

knew his secret. And having her call him Dick when he was Nightwing was certainly preferable to the reverse.

"Ok," she agreed. Then Lian asked through her tears, "Will you still be my auntie?"

"Oh, of course, sweetheart! You'll still have your room here, and all your aunts and uncles will help Uncle Dick take care of you just like we did for your Daddy, ok?"

Lian agreed softly, "Ok."

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Dick had always thought it rained at funerals. It had rained at his parents' funeral and it always rained in the movies, but today was a bright fair day. He almost wished it were raining; that way it would match what was in his heart. He had decided to attend the funeral as Nightwing so that he could stand with his teammates. Besides, his relationship with Roy had been more based on his life as Nightwing than as himself. No, he thought, that wasn't really true. He just thought it had been until now.

It hadn't taken much discussion among himself and the remaining other three original Titans to decide that the funeral should be outside rather than in a church. It was unusual, that they knew, but Roy hadn't been a usual person. In very many senses of the word. And although he had hardly ever talked about it, Roy's closest friends knew that spiritually he had been Navajo with deep connections to the outside world. Which meant an outside funeral.

They hadn't known who to ask to perform the ceremony since Roy hadn't had contact with the Navajo nation for years, but Dick had done some research on Navajo ceremonies and views on death. He had learned that the Navajo had an aversion to death which meant a funeral that was straight and to the point. Which suited Dick just fine. Dick had a friend from his one semester at Hudson who had become a minister, and he knew that she would allow the Titans to design the ceremony, providing direction only when needed.

Silence brought Dick to the present, and he realized that people were waiting for him to speak. Everyone else thought he was the clear choice to give the eulogy, and logically he supposed they were right, but emotionally he wished it could be someone else. At least he had his mask to hide behind. He stood, walked around Roy's closed casket, and stepped up onto a low platform to stand in front of the seated assembly, grasping the podium until his knuckles turned white. He stood still and silent, observing the crowd assembled before him, because he knew if he tried to speak at that moment, nothing but a strangled noise would come out.

All the Titans were present in costume, both past and present members, and Troia held Lian. Lian's face was hidden as she clutched Donna, telling Dick that the little girl knew exactly why they were all here. Behind the Titans sat most members of the JLA, including all members who had been around long enough to know the Titans when they were just five teenaged sidekicks trying to find their place in the world. Dick made the mistake of looking at Black Canary, who had been the closest person Roy had had to a mother, and looked away quickly before his tears came. He knew if even one escaped it would

open a floodgate. Next to her sat Connor Hawke.

On the other side of the assembly Dick spotted Barbara accompanied by Alfred. Dick noted that the pair was as far as the JLA gathering as possible. Barbara's identity as Oracle was unknown to all JLAers except Batman, and of course Alfred could express no hint that he knew either Batman or Nightwing, a fact that Dick knew all three of them detested. He and Bruce were used to being able to count on Alfred for support, and Alfred was used to being their rock. He was aware that Barbara was trying to catch his eye, but as with Black Canary, Dick didn't dare look at her. Instead he looked at Alfred, and while Dick's surrogate grandfather looked distressed, somehow he still was able to support Dick from behind the gathering.

There were the civilians that Roy had touched with his life. Some Dick knew, some he didn't. He spotted Chanda, Lian's babysitter, and some of the many young people Roy had counseled in their quests to become drug free. He saw Ben, the young boy Roy had befriended and then taught to be an archer to the point of excellence. He was surprised to see a few attenders who looked Native American. Perhaps Roy did keep connections with his Navajo past after all. And his heart skipped a beat as he spotted Cheshire out of costume. He knew she knew he recognized her, but her expression gave no silent message except sorrow. He hoped Chanda didn't notice Jade.

Dick looked down at the podium in front of him and began, "Roy was..excellence. But most of the time, he didn't see it in himself." He looked up. He didn't dare think about the words he was saying. "He was irreverent, and always loved a good joke, practical or otherwise. Most of the time he drove me nuts." Some laughter sprinkled through the crowd as many in the audience nodded in agreement and understanding. "He was the best shot in the world. Present company includedâ€”sorry Conner," Nightwing gave the young Green Arrow a crooked smile as the light, soft laughter continued. Conner returned Nightwing's expression with a small smile that didn't touch his eyes before dropping his moist gaze to his lap.

Nightwing lost his smile, and the crowd fell silent as he continued, "He fought and won incredible battles. The hardest weren't fought with his bow. He overcame an addiction to heroin. He did his part to rid the world of drugs, on multiple levels. He was a government agent," Dick glanced at Cheshire without meaning to. It was on a mission as a government agent that he had fathered Lian. "And he helped others rid themselves of the poison." He looked to the boys from the counseling center. "He cared a lot more than his usual outward personality let on.

"We've all had our own personal losses, but I think I didn't know anyone who had lost more people in his life than Roy had. He lost his own father at age two, and then his Navajo foster father when he was thirteen." Dick paused and took a deep breath. "Then he lost Oliver Queen, whom many of you knew as the original Green Arrow. Losses like that can turn a man's heart black, but Roy just kept fighting." His voice cracked at his last word, and the tears Dick had been fighting all this time finally fought their way to the surface. He paused, bowing his head, squeezing his eyes shut, and gripping the podium as he tried to get his emotions back under control. After a moment, he had forced the tears

back down and was able to look up again. "Because of his losses, Roy

understood the importance of family." Dick looked sadly at Bruce.

"The Titans became his family. Even with his insecurities, he knew that when it came down to it, he was always welcome and loved by the people that make our team. To myself the other original Titans, Roy was our brother. We grew up together, and I don't know what I'm going to do without him." His voice cracked. He hadn't meant to say that last part. His tears started again, and this time there was no stopping them as he brought his hands to his face and cried. But he shouldn't have removed his hands from the podium, because he found he couldn't stay on his feet without its support. He fell to his knees behind the podium. He knew it was unseemly for the leader of the Titans to sob so out of control in front of a crowd he largely did not know, but now there was no getting control back.

Everything was a blur until he felt strong supportive arms around him. He looked up to see Wally, with red eyes and streaked tear stains on his face, on his knees beside him. His expression was asking Nightwing if he could regain his feet, and Nightwing nodded. The men rose to their feet together, and Wally tried to lead Nightwing down from the platform. But Nightwing stopped him. He still had something else he had to say. He nodded to his friend that he was ok enough to continue, and, nodding in return although his concern was obvious, Wally returned to his seat.

Dick took a deep breath before he continued. "He loved no one more than he loved his little girl Lian." Nightwing dared to look at no one now, for his emotional display had most of the audience sobbing, so he focused on the podium and the casket in front of him, although he shielded his mind from what his eyes were seeing. "She taught him as much as he taught her. She taught him responsibility, and gave him a reason to stay clean. What he wanted most for her was a happy childhood, something that was denied him, and for her to know her family and heritage." He paused again, gathering his last, most important thoughts, "I stand here before you all and attest that I and the rest of the Titans will help her new guardian make this true to the best of our abilities. And I attest that she will grow up and know what a great man her father was." Now he was done. After a moment of making sure he was strong enough, Nightwing stepped down from the podium and into the waiting arms of his teammates. He felt more drained than he ever had in his life.

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Dick and the rest of the Titans had organized an Irish wake because they knew that's what Roy would have wanted, but Dick didn't understand how the Irish could be lighthearted enough to tell jokes and stories about the person who died. Bruce would have offered his home for the wake, except for the obvious dilemma of hidden identities. Not even most of Batman's teammates knew he was Bruce Wayne. So instead they were at Roy's favorite Irish pub in Manhattan. They had closed out the pub so that the costumed heroes did not have to worry about being disturbed by curious strangers.

Dick was sitting at a table in the corner, and would have just been happy to sit alone so he could brood, but his teammates had surrounded him without his permission. He knew that even if he had protested, they wouldn't have left him alone. Donna was sitting on one side of him with Lian in her lap, Wally on the other, and Garth



next to Wally, and most of the rest of the Titans were seated silently around the large table. Behind them there was quiet milling as the heroes and civilians mingled in largely separated circles. Dick knew that most of the civilians were intimidated by the costumed heroes. Dick saw both Barbara and Alfred look at him, and he knew they were wishing they could offer their support as well. He smiled sadly at both, communicating that he knew what they wanted and appreciated it.

The Titans sat silently, simply taking comfort in each other's presence. Dick's attention was drawn to Donna's lap as Lian started to squirm and held her little arms to him. Dick looked into her sad eyes, and granted her request, accepting the little girl from his friend. Lian put her arms around Nightwing's neck, and Dick held her close, stroking her hair softly.

Finally, Grant quietly broke the silence, "Remember when he tossed me head first in the pool?"

Kory smiled sadly, "Yeah you were mad at him for a day afterwards."

Wally added, "Oh talk about mad, what about the time he put Vaseline on my boots. I coulda killed him."

Toni stifled a laugh, "He put Vaseline on your boots? I bet that was a sight." Wally half-glared at her.

Garth threw in, "I remember when Batman caught one of his arrows."

Jesse Quick questioned incredulously, "He \*caught\* the arrow?"

Wally grinned, "Yeah, had the boy spooked for life." He looked to Nightwing, hoping to find his friend sharing a smile, but was disappointed when he saw that Nightwing still held his brooding expression.

Donna offered, "I remember when it was just the five of us. Five sidekicks of five members of the JLA, and Roy so wanted to make Green Arrow proud of him. Of course we all wanted to make our mentors proud of us, but Roy most of all." She continued sadly, her eyes in the distance as she remembered, "He tried so hard." Her eyes started to moisten, "One time he saved us all—the other Titans and the JLA—we had all been captured except him, and he mounted a one-man rescue. He saved us, and Green Arrow hardly acknowledged him at all." Now her tears

started.

Suddenly Nightwing stood, shortly handed Lian back to Donna, causing the little girl to burst into tears, and left the table. The Titans' eyes followed him as he stalked out of the room, and the Titans were thrust back into silence.

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When he finally stopped, Dick found himself in a small alley near the pub. He leaned against the wall and allowed himself to slide into a squatting position. He covered his face with his hands, but he was

able to control his emotions now. He just had to be alone for a few minutes, he told himself. He couldn't listen to conversation about Roy right now. Maybe later, but not now.

Suddenly he was aware that he was not alone, and before he could think about it, he had sprung to a standing position. Cheshireâ€"no, Jade; she wasn't in costumeâ€"stood before him. Nightwing instinctively took a defensive position, but suspected that his death wasn't on her mind right now since she wasn't dressed in her green costume. He knew she made a very strong line between Cheshire, her working identity, and Jade, her civilian name.

She had an amused look on her face as she noted Nightwing's position. Then her expression became deadly serious as she asked him, "What do you know of the man who has been given custody of my daughter?"

Does she know? Nightwing wondered. Trying to keep cool and collected, Nightwing answered, "I know he's the foster son of Bruce Wayne. I met him a few times through Roy, and he seemed like a responsible man. I know Roy trusted him, or else he never would have given Mr. Grayson custody of Lian. What are your intentions?"

"I still want the best for my daughter. Roy's death doesn't change that. I have been checking into 'Mr. Grayson's' credentials, and will continue to check into them." Nightwing looked for any clue that indicated that she had discovered his secret identity. There was none, but Dick knew that didn't mean that she didn't know. "Right now, I believe Lian is better off with Mr. Grayson, you, and the rest of the Titans, but the minute that changes, I'll be on your doorstep. Do I make myself clear, hero?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'll relay your message." Nightwing tried to hide his relief.

Jade's voice took an edge, "Although, I wonderâ€"if Roy thought so highly of this millionaire's son, why wasn't he at the funeral?" Her eyes took a dangerous air.

Dick thought quickly, "He is in Asia on Wayne Enterprises business. We've contacted him to inform him of his new role, and he willingly accepted. But he was unable to return to the states in time for the funeral. He should be here tomorrow, and in the meantime, the Titans will care for her. And we will continue to help Mr. Grayson care for her. Jade, I can tell you that all the Titans love Lian like she was our own daughter, and we will continue to love and care for her as such. And what I said at the funeral standsâ€"Lian will know her father, and I will personally ensure that she knows her mother as well." Nightwing communicated his seriousness with his masked gaze, and after a moment

of locking eyes, Jade nodded. Dick didn't particularly like the prospect of having contact with a known assassin other than bringing her to justice, but he knew Roy had kept Jade updated on Lian, and he had to continue that for his friend.

Jade confided, "It might interest you to know that the men that did this have been taken down." Nightwing looked into her cold eyes, and understood. Before he could protest, Jade continued, "Don't give me any of your hero ethics crap. I couldn't let the murderers of the

father of my child think they got away with it." Nightwing thought he saw the closest thing to compassionate emotion that he had seen from the assassin. Nightwing simply nodded, and realized that a little part of him was glad it ended like that, although he would never, ever tell anyone.

Nightwing started, "Do you.. who.." He couldn't seem to get the words out, but Jade understood.

She answered, "They were hired goons of Manuel Santiago, a drug lord Roy had caused trouble for. I intend to make his life..difficult.. as well." Her eyes dared Nightwing to stop her, or even to protest.

Nightwing looked into her icy gaze for a moment and simply nodded. He knew she meant she was going to kill him. He knew that he should try to stop her. But not today. Today wasn't a day for battles. So Nightwing found himself simply watching as Jade warned, "Take care of my daughter, hero," and sauntered out of the alley as if to testify that she knew he wouldn't stop her.

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Santiago was having a good day. Finally he had rid himself of Harper, that annoying archer who had always seemed to get in his way at just the wrong time. Well not anymore. Ok, he lost the two men that had done the job for him, but as Santiago saw it, that just meant he didn't have to pay the bonuses he had promised whoever took Harper down. Santiago was whistling musically as he inspected the newest import in his operation's docking bay. It was his largest yet. The men worked fairly quickly in unpacking the heroin, and Santiago guessed it was because he was present. Always good to have that fear impact on the men that worked for you, he thought.

Suddenly men's shouts filled the warehouse, and Santiago looked quickly to find the source. He saw a figure moving like the wind, laying destruction to whatever had the misfortune to lay in its path. Santiago's heart jumped. He had men tailing the Asian assassin who had taken down Harper's killers, and Santiago knew that it was likely that she had lost the tail, but he should have had some kind of warning. He started to run for the door.

Just as he thought he was going to make it, Santiago was hit squarely in the jaw. He was surprised by the force of the blow; he didn't know that any woman could hit like that. Then he got a look at his assailant. It wasn't the green-clad assassin, but rather a man, dressed in a black bodysuit with a blue wing design and a mask covering his face. Santiago thought this must be Blüdhaven's Nightwing. Nightwing grabbed Santiago by the collar and hauled him to his feet. Santiago looked quickly around the room for signs of help, but to his despair he found that all his men had deserted the scene.

Nightwing growled at him, "Did you really think you could have a Titan killed and get away with it?" Santiago was showered with spittle as Nightwing continued, "You do well to watch your back, but Cheshire isn't your only worry. Roy was my brother, and you are going to pay for what you've done."

Santiago was shaking uncontrollably as he sobbed, "I'm sorry! I

didn't realize! I didn't know!" Of course he knew that Harper had been Arsenal, the archer member of the Titans, but he hoped that he could lie his way out. He had forgotten, however, the strength of the loyalty of a friend.

"Call your men back in here. You and I are going to destroy each and every ounce of this poison you sell, and then depending on how cooperative you are, I'll decide what to do with you." Santiago did as he was told, and after a few minutes of calling, the men started to peek back into the warehouse and cautiously entered. Nightwing raised his voice, "None of you will come to harm as long as you do as I say. I want every single pack of smack opened and thrown into the river. I will inspect your work when you say you're done, and if I find one ounce left, you will be sorry. Do I make myself clear?"

Some of the men nodded, while, disorganized, others hurriedly began their task. Nightwing looked upon the scene with frustration and disgust. He took one look at Santiago and punched him in the face, causing the drug lord to slump to the floor. He stalked to the wall facing the bay and sidekicked a hole in the wall. Working quickly and percisely, he applied plastique and moved the men to a safe distance. He released the explosion, destroying the wall. Moving in an efficient, take-charge manner, he started to pull men and point as he said, "Ok, now you, you, and you, stand here, here, and here." He had created an assembly line.

"Now, you" he pointed to the man farthest from the water, "make a cross cut like this," he traced the bag with his finger, "and pass it down. When he's done you," he pointed to the next man, "do the same thing with those," he pointed to the bags in front of him. He addressed the line, "Everyone is responsible for destroying the bags in front of him. Remember, I'm going to inspect afterwards." The men started to work. Nightwing went to the man closest to the water, "I want you to actually shake the smack out of the bag. Don't just drop the bag in the water, ok?" The man nodded dumbly, muted with fear.

After hours of watching the drug be destroyed, Nightwing actually felt better. This was his memorial to Roy. He knew this was the best gift he could give to his friend's memory. The task was done, and as promised, Nightwing had imspectred the job. They had done well. Just goes to show that a little fear can go a long way. Now the police were arrivingâ€"Nightwing had asked Oracle to alert the copsâ€"and Nightwing watched as the boys in blue rounded up the workers. Not one had even tried to escape much to Dick's delight. Santiago had regained consciousness, and Nightwing had him by the back of the collar, holding the drug lord in front of him.

Nightwing walked Santiago to Commissioner Nagler. "Here you go, Commissioner. As if all this weren't enough, he's the one that had Arsenal murdered. I expect he'll be dealt with appropriately."

"Of course, Nightwing," Nagler responded, "This one is definitely not going to get away from us. I can guarantee it." Nightwing nodded with satisfaction. He believed the commissioner, even if he had to make it true himself.

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End  
file.